

5.1 HISTORY OF NATIONAL SERVICE IN THE U.S.

When faced with challenges, our nation has always relied on the dedication and action of citizens. The Corporation for National and Community Service carries on a long tradition of citizen involvement by providing opportunities for Americans of all ages to improve their communities through service. Following is a history of national service.

Circa 1905

American philosophers William James and John Dewey develop intellectual foundations for service-based learning.

1910

American philosopher William James envisions non-military national service in his essay "The Moral Equivalent of War."

1933-1942

Franklin D. Roosevelt creates the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), providing opportunities for millions of young men to serve six to 18 months to help restore the nation's parks, revitalize the economy, and support their families and themselves.

1935

The Works Progress Administration, later renamed the Work Projects Administration, is established to provide work-relief for millions of unemployed Americans.

1944

The GI Bill, officially known as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, is created, linking service and education and offering Americans educational opportunity in return for service to their country.

1960s

Demonstration projects for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program (which together are known today as Senior Corps) are launched to demonstrate the effectiveness of the service model and to engage older Americans in a range of service activities.

1961

President John F. Kennedy proposes establishment of the Peace Corps and Congress authorizes it on September 22, 1961. President Kennedy states, "The wisdom of this idea is that someday we'll bring it home to America."

The White House Conference on Aging is held, drawing attention to the continuing opportunity and need to engage older adults in meaningful service activities.

1964

As part of the "War on Poverty," President Lyndon B. Johnson creates VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), a National Teacher Corps, the Job Corps, and University Year of Action.

1965

College work-study programs are established to harness the energy and enthusiasm of young people in communities.

The Older Americans Act of 1965 is passed (an outcome of the 1961 White House Conference on Aging). The Act sparked interest in creating programs for older adults and insuring their continued contribution to society.

The Foster Grandparent Program begins as a national demonstration effort to show how low-income persons aged 60 and over can establish meaningful relationships with children in need.

The Community Service Society of New York launches a pilot project involving a group of older adults in volunteer service to their communities. The project demonstrates the value of senior volunteers and serves as a precursor to the Retired Senior Volunteer Program.

1966

Urban Corps emerges, funded with federal work-study dollars. 3,600 VISTA members are serving throughout the country, helping to develop the first Head Start programs and Job Corps sites, and starting agricultural cooperatives, community groups, and small businesses.

1966-1967

The phrase "service-learning" is first used to describe a project in East Tennessee that links students and faculty with area development organizations.

1968

The National Service Secretariat Conference on National Service is held in Washington, D.C.

Foster Grandparent projects grow to 40 states and Puerto Rico, enrolling 4,100 Foster Grandparents and assisting more than 10,000 children in health, education, welfare, and related settings.

1969

Retired Senior Volunteer Program was authorized under Title VI of the Older Americans Act.

1968-1971

Two Senior Companion demonstration projects, funded by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and the Administration on Aging, are launched in Tampa, Florida, and Cincinnati, Ohio.

1970s

In 1970, the Youth Conservation Corps engages 38,000 people ages 14 to 18 in summer environmental programs.

VISTA merges with the Peace Corps and senior service programs to form the ACTION agency.

1971

The White House Conference on Youth Report calls for linking service and learning. The National Center for Public Service Internships, the Society for Field Experience Education, and the National Student Volunteer Program are established.

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is launched in the spring and 11 projects begin by summer.

1972

More than 10,000 Foster Grandparents are enrolled in 133 projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

1973

The Foster Grandparent Program, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, and the Senior Companion Program are authorized under the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973.

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program grows to 590 projects nationwide.

1974

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program grows to 666 projects nationwide. Eighteen model Senior Companion projects are funded.

1975

More than 1,000 Senior Companions are serving in projects. More than 60 percent serve in private homes.

1976

California Governor Jerry Brown establishes the California Conservation Corps, the first non-federal youth corps at the state level.

1977-1978

Existing Senior Companions projects are expanded and 28 new projects are funded, creating opportunities for 3,000 Senior Companions to assist 9,500 clients in 39 states. In-home assignments grow to 65 percent.

1978

The Young Adult Conservation Corps creates small conservation corps in the states with 22,500 participants age 16 to 23.

1979

National Student Volunteer Program becomes the National Center for Service-Learning.

1980s

National service efforts are launched at the grassroots level, including the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (1984) and Campus Compact (1985), which help mobilize students in higher education; the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (1985), which helps replicate youth corps in states and cities; and Youth Service America (1985), through which many young people are provided the opportunity to serve.

VISTA's focus changes to encourage citizen participation and community self-help.

1980-1987

Forty-two new Senior Companion projects are funded, and approximately 81 percent of placements are in-home assignments.

1981

National Center for Service-Learning for Early Adolescents is established.

1986

The VISTA Literacy Corps is developed to create literacy councils and expand adult education.

1988

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program grows to 750 projects nationwide, with approximately 400,000 senior volunteers participating.

The Senior Companion Program grows to 173 projects nationwide, with more than 8,000 senior volunteers participating.

1989-1990

President George H.W. Bush creates the Office of National Service in the White House and the Points of Light Foundation to foster volunteering.

1990

President Bush signs the National and Community Service Act of 1990 into law. The legislation authorizes grants to schools to support service-learning through Serve America (now known as Learn and Serve America) and demonstration grants for national service programs to youth corps, nonprofits, and colleges and universities. Governor-appointed state service commissions are created in the new bill to coordinate national service recruitment, administer community based service learning and develop a state service plan.

1992

A bipartisan group of Senators drafts legislation to create the National Civilian Community Corps as a way to explore how to use post-Cold War military resources to help solve problems here at home.

The Maryland State Board of Education adopts a mandatory service requirement to graduate from high school.

September 1993

President Bill Clinton signs the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, creating AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National and Community Service to expand opportunities for Americans to serve their communities. VISTA and the National Civilian Community Corps become part of AmeriCorps, and the Foster Grandparent Program, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, and the Senior Companion Program are combined to create Senior Corps.

With passage of National and Community Service Act, Congress changes Retired Senior Volunteer Program to Retired “and” Senior Volunteer program to reflect that not all volunteers were retired.

Governor appointed Service Commissions were designated to administer AmeriCorps funding at the state level.

1994

The Corporation for National and Community Service officially begins operation and reaches out to states to create State Commissions to administer the AmeriCorps State funds.

Congress passes the King Holiday and Service Act of 1994, charging the Corporation for National and Community Service with establishing Martin Luther King Day as a day of service.

1994

Four National Civilian Community Corps campuses open in Aberdeen, MD; Charleston, SC; Denver, CO; and San Diego, CA.

September 1994

The first class of AmeriCorps members - 20,000 strong - begins serving in more than 1,000 communities.

1995

A study commissioned by the IBM Foundation, the Charles A. Dana Foundation, and the James Irvine Foundation finds that every federal dollar invested in AmeriCorps results in \$1.60 to \$2.60 or more in direct, measurable benefits to AmeriCorps members and the communities they serve.

April 1997

The Presidents' Summit for America's Future, chaired by General Colin Powell, brings together President Clinton, former Presidents Bush, Ford, and Carter, and Mrs. Reagan to encourage increased service and volunteerism to meet the needs of America's youth.

1997

AmeriCorps expands by introducing the Education Awards Program, which allows more organizations to join the service network -- nonprofits, faith-based organizations, colleges and universities, welfare-to-work programs, and other groups.

President Clinton and former President George Bush announce the resumption of the Daily Points of Light Award.

American Association of State Service Commissions (ASC) was launched.

1999

Since the program began, more than 100,000 AmeriCorps members have served 33 million people in 4,000 communities

October 1999

AmeriCorps celebrates five years and 150,000 members. General Colin Powell, Utah's Governor Mike Leavitt, Coretta Scott King, and Sargent Shriver join President Clinton at the White House to honor the winners of the first All*AmeriCorps awards.

June 2000

The Foster Grandparent Program commemorates its 35th anniversary. As the Senior Companion Program enters its 26th

year of service, and RSVP looks ahead to its 30th birthday in 2001, the three National Senior Service Corps programs engage more than 500,000 adults age 55 and older in sharing their time and talents to help meet local community needs.

October 2000

AmeriCorps*VISTA commemorates 35 years of fighting poverty in America. Since 1965, more than 130,000 VISTA members have used a hands-on, grassroots approach to empower individuals and communities throughout the country.

2001

President George W. Bush calls for a “nation of citizens, not spectators” in his inaugural address and launches faith-based and community initiative to expand support for grassroots organizations meeting local needs.

The first International Conference on Service-Learning Research is held. A conference on student civic engagement is held.

September 11, 2001

Terrorist attacks spark a surge of patriotism and volunteer service by Americans.

January 2002

In his state of the Union Address, President George W. Bush asks all Americans to devote two years or 4,000 hours to volunteer service during their lifetimes. As part of this call to service, he creates USA Freedom Corps, a White House office and coordinating council to encourage Americans to serve their communities and country. He also proposes to expand AmeriCorps by 50 percent.

July 2002

The Corporation awards first Homeland Security grants to engage citizens in public health, public safety, and disaster relief and preparedness.

2003

President Bush creates the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation to find ways to recognize the valuable contributions volunteers are making in our Nation. The Council creates the President’s Volunteer Service Award program as a way to thank and honor Americans who, by their demonstrated commitment and example, inspire others to engage in volunteer service.

December 2003

The Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reports that both the number of volunteers and the volunteer rate rose over the year ended in September 2003. About 63.8 million people did volunteer work at some point from September 2002 to September 2003, up from 59.8 million for the similar period ended in September 2002.

January 2004

AmeriCorps receives record funding increase to allow programs to grow to 75,000 members.

2004 - More than 330,000 individuals have served their country through AmeriCorps.

April 2009

Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act is passed and signed by President Obama reauthorizing AmeriCorps and expanding national service.

April 2011

Congress eliminates funding for Learn and Serve program through CNCS and cuts funding for RSVP and AmeriCorps programs.

September 2011

CNCS and President Obama urge groundswell of volunteerism to commemorate the 10th anniversary of 9/11 to honor the legacy of those who lost their lives in the World Trade Center towers.

2012 - More than 750,000 individuals have served their country through AmeriCorps.